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USIB-D-39.7/25
29 January 1968

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Committee on Documentation Report on its Review
of the Study by Task Team V (Biographic Intelligence)

REFERENCES : a. USIB-D-39.7/6, 6 May 1964
b. USIB-M-322, 29 April 1965, Item 5
c. USIB-D-39.7/5, 16 March 1964

1. The enclosed report by the Chairman, Committee on Documentation (CODIB) summarizing the results of the Committee's review of the study undertaken by CODIB's Task Team V (Biographic Intelligence) in response to USIB directives in reference a., is submitted for USIB consideration.

2. This memorandum states that, following a review of both Task Team V's report and a CODIB Support Staff report, the CODIB members recommend against their being forwarded to USIB and instead agreed to have them maintained in the CODIB file with copies to be made available on request. CODIB will continue to give priority attention to biographic intelligence and reports on this subject will be submitted to USIB as warranted.

3. Since Task Team V has been dissolved and all other CODIB task teams have completed their tasks and reports have been forwarded to USIB, CODIB will submit no further task team reports in direct response to the recommendations of the Staff for the Community Information Processing Study (SCIPS) report, reference a.

4. It is not planned to schedule this report on the USIB agenda for discussion unless specifically requested by a Board member to do so prior to close of business 5 February 1968. In the absence of such a request it will be considered for record purposes, that USIB "noted" the subject report on that date.

Executive Secretary

Attachment

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Excluded from automatic
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CODIB-D-111/1.5/8
29 January 1968

U N I T E D S T A T E S I N T E L L I G E N C E B O A R D
COMMITTEE ON DOCUMENTATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Biographic Intelligence


REFERENCES: (a) USIB-D-39.7/5, 16 March 1964
(b) USIB-D-39.7/6, 6 May 1964

1. On 29 November 1967 the Chairman of CODIB submitted to the CODIB members a CODIB Support Staff report on biographics. This report was undertaken as a follow-up to a Report on Biographics submitted to CODIB on 11 February 1966 by Task Team V which had been organized in response to USIB direction in Reference (b).

2. CODIB, after careful consideration, recommended that the earlier report by Task Team V not be forwarded to USIB. Similarly, the CODIB members have reviewed the Support Staff report and do not recommend that it be forwarded to USIB. These reports provide a valuable inventory of biographic files and other information but do not define biographic intelligence problems and possible solutions with sufficient strength and precision to warrant USIB consideration. These reports will be kept on file in CODIB and copies will be available on request*.

3. Task Team V, Biographics, was dissolved after it submitted its report in February 1966. All other CODIB task teams which were organized pursuant to the recommendations in Reference (a), as approved in Reference (b), have completed their tasks and reports have been submitted to USIB. CODIB, therefore, will submit no further task team reports in direct response to the recommendations of the SCIPS report (Reference a).

4. CODIB will continue to give priority attention to biographic intelligence. The Soviet Biographic Panel of COINS is now exploring biographic matters in some depth and subsequent reports on this subject will be submitted to USIB as warranted.



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Chairman
Committee on Documentation

* Copies of both were sent to the USIB Secretariat.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, CODIB

SUBJECT : Biographic Intelligence

REFERENCE : CODIB - D - 111/1.5/7

1. The referenced paper is another in a long series of tragedies -- some might say tragicomedies -- in the name of biographic intelligence. The document sprang from a useful, if apparently misunderstood, compilation of biographic files which represents a genuine contribution. Had only this much investigation led to analysis and an extension of the investigation, or directly to publication of the Annex, there might yet have been a contribution arise in the subject area. Neither course followed, so one must now take additional hours to expiate what has been done.

2. The referenced document is as replete with condemnation and recommendation as it is devoid of evidence. No effort has been made to identify the nature of biographic requests and responses over any meaningful population or to look at the validity of the request and the quality of the response. On this alone, it seems absurd to be commenting on the efficiency of such systems. The implied assumption that CIA and DIA have not performed their mission under DCID 4/9 because other agencies have built biographic files is naive. At best it points to the paucity of analysis in the paper. It is not enough to excuse this in the introduction by saying that the paper is not an exhaustive analysis. It is not even an elementary analysis, or indeed analysis at all. It is a litany of assumptions which have been parroted by people who are too lazy to look or to think and who hide behind a technology which they do not understand for exactly the same reasons.

3. I've heard a good deal about the lack of secure communications but I've found few genuine cases of such lack nor have I witnessed high frequency use of the secure facilities which exist. If adequate secure communication is a secure phone on every analyst's desk in the intelligence

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community, I'm afraid the answer is that we can't afford this for some time. What are the weaknesses in storage and retrieval systems? Let's help the biographic people rather than injure them, tell them what's wrong, unless it is that the analyst is too lazy or too stupid to phrase his question so that it can be discreetly searched. What are the failures in scope and depth of coverage of the files? Is it that someone wants a 10,000 character response on minor personalities? If it is the latter, know that we will have to spend a good share of the Gross National Product to produce a responsive system. Is it not likely that individual agencies or organizations have highly specific biographic needs which cannot be met economically in a central file but which can be accommodated in small files? Unfortunately, small files have a way of growing until they are provided a poor excuse for a central service but rationalizing it on the basis that it is necessary for any of thousands of reasons.)

4. One might think that if biographic units do a good job for in-house customers and a less good one for others that it may be because the information required by different organizations is different. Presumably one shouldn't think that because it wouldn't suggest a central file. The notion that all files should be the same because the basic information is the same is foolish. One might thus argue that the information of the pharmaceutical and explosive industry should be the same because they both rely on chemistry.

5. By what information processing standards is biographic information inefficient and inadequate? There are thousands of biographic files in the world. Few that I know of, however, are either as large or as highly automated as those in the intelligence community. No system has been invented that provides "adequately" (if that means to everyone's satisfaction and at no cost) the requirements of its customers, nor is one likely to be invented. Biographic file keepers are unlikely to be so diabolical that they invent duplicative files so that documentary analysts can be employed to criticize them. Nor are they so stupid that, if an obvious solution to all their labors existed, one of them would not have seized the opportunity to create it. Biographic files are created because there is a need for them, they will be and have been changed (the referenced report admits this) as there is a need for change.

6. The conclusions of the paper are bizarre. They refer to the findings of the paper which are that there are a good many biographic files and they all stem from basic information; to modern technology and methodology which are nowhere discussed; and finally, to "inefficient, inadequate and badly in need of overhaul" files with no definition of what

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the terms mean. They then propose courses of action which are nowhere related either to defined needs or to economic capability or feasibility (the latter are assumed wherever they must be referred to). Finally, the recommendations urge courses of action which are redundant, overlapping, always overwhelming, and finally urge CODIB -- which is still without any genuine information on the subject and with meagre resources to devote to any activity -- to provide planning, guidance and coordination necessary to implement said recommendations.

7. Where do we go from here? I suggest CODIB start over with a serious, orderly look at its biographic intelligence requirements, requests, responses, and file characteristics as well as its file resources. This would include salvaging the useful, factual material from both the original Task Team V and from the referenced document. This information should provide enough facts to replace or to verify existing assumptions. It ought also to present those avenues of biographic effort which need modification. I cannot conceive spending large sums of money to modify a system which is not even understood, particularly where there seem to be as many satisfied as unsatisfied customers. Should CODIB be unwilling to do this, I suggest CODIB simply drop this subject and let its members get their work done as best they can. This report should be rejected out-of-hand in its present form.


CIA Member
CODIB

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